

STATE ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

2021



State Archivist, Ashley Selima, and Public Information and Visitor Experience Specialist, Malen Cepparo, offer a bilingual tour of the new State Archives and display special documents including the signed 1777 Declaration of Independence, for Progreso Latino in August 2021.



Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State



ABOUT US



WHO WE ARE

The Rhode Island State Archives is operated by the Rhode Island Department of State under the leadership of Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea. The State Archives was first authorized by Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 42-8.1 in 1989, under the purview of the Secretary of State. It was established that, "the division shall be the official custodian and trustee for the state of all public records of permanent historical, legal or other value, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which are transferred to it from any public office of the state or any political subdivision thereof."

WHAT WE DO

As the repository for official permanent records of Rhode Island state government, the State Archives strives to protect, maintain, and preserve Rhode Island's powerful history.

The State Archives has three primary objectives:

1. To advance the Rhode Island Department of State's mission to engage and empower all Rhode Islanders by making government more accessible and transparent and encouraging civic pride;
2. To assist Rhode Island residents in learning about their history and increase awareness of Rhode Island's history; and
3. To ensure transparency and accessibility by conserving and preserving records and making them available to the public through exhibitions, public programs, and digital initiatives.

In addition to preserving permanent records of state government, the State Archives also works closely with cities and towns to manage the State Archives Local Government Records Program. This work ensures that records across Rhode Island are maintained and preserved according to the law.

The Local Government Records Program helps cities and towns through a variety of programs including:

- Workshops & Public Presentations: State Archives staff provide updated information on standards, best practices, and State Archives services for records management and preservation; and
- Clean-up Days: State Archives staff provide full-day guidance and on-site approval for destruction of records which have met their legal retention requirement.

THE STATE ARCHIVES TEAM

Ashley Selima
State Archivist &
Public Records
Administrator

Zachary Garceau
Administrative
Records &
Technical Services
Specialist

Tracey Croce
Local Government
Records
Coordinator

Rachel Strashnick
Records Analyst/
Data Manager II

Richard Hite
State Records
Coordinator

Mark Kleniewski
Administrative
Assistant

Ken Carlson
Reference Analyst

**Kaitlynne
Ward Morris**
Director of State
Archives, Library
& Public Information

Kate Telford
Senior Digital
Archivist

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FROM SECRETARY GORBEA



Dear Rhode Islander:

Public records are the backbone of government transparency. The State Archives and Public Records Administration holds the critical responsibility of managing and preserving these records properly to ensure that Rhode Islanders have access to information about their government and history. Dating back to colonial Rhode Island, these public records capture just some of the stories that show how ordinary Rhode Islanders lived, were civically engaged, and shaped the Ocean State that we know today. I am pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report for the Rhode Island State Archives and Public Records Administration to showcase our efforts to protect and promote Rhode Island history through the preservation of archival records.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Archives continued to operate with modified in-person services throughout 2021. Despite our limited in-person services, our staff worked hard to improve access to the State Archives by digitizing more than 150,000 high demand genealogical records, providing access to vital records on-line for the first time ever.

As Secretary of State, one of my key goals has been increasing knowledge of state history and engagement in civic life. I'm proud to share our successes over the past year in making government more transparent and accountable, and look forward to welcoming you to the State Archives in 2022.

Sincerely,

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

OUR COLLECTION



More than
10 MILLION
records



Accumulated over
380 YEARS



Over
260,000
public digital objects



Over
1.2 MILLION
digital record
downloads



LOOKING BACK: 2021 IN REVIEW

A YEAR IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS



570

IN-PERSON
ATTENDEES



278

VIRTUAL
PROGRAM
VIEWERS



1,042

OUT-OF-STATE
RESEARCHERS



918

IN STATE
RESEARCHERS

10%
increase from
2020!

A YEAR IN RECORDS



2,422

AGENCY
MANAGEMENT
REQUESTS



6,257

HISTORICAL
RECORDS
REQUESTED



5,936

HISTORICAL
RECORDS
RETRIEVED

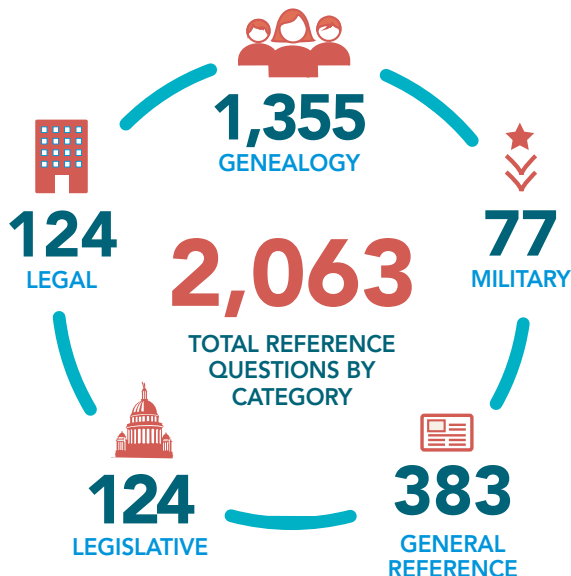


380

DUAL
CITIZENSHIP
ASSISTANCE

60%
increase from
2020!

A YEAR IN REFERENCE



PROCESS OF A GENEALOGY REQUEST

1

QUESTION RECEIVED

Requests come in via email and the reference team locates the vital record listing within the available indices to identify where to find the original record.

2

REVIEW REQUEST

If the record has been digitized, the reference team assists the requester in accessing and downloading the record at home from the Digital Archives.

3

LOCATING THE RECORD

If the record has not yet been digitized or the requester would like a certified copy, the reference team makes a physical copy of the record to certify.

4

COMPILING RECORDS

The reference team creates accompanying documents to identify what records were found, how many were found, and provides information about associated costs.

5

RECORD DELIVERY

Records are certified and mailed to the requester.

To expand accessibility and to grow our online collection, vital records are being digitized daily.



LOOKING BACK: HIGHLIGHTS

OUR COLLECTIONS

PHYSICAL



**+160 CUBIC FEET
OF RECORDS**
WERE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION

In 2021, the State Archives received several significant accessions, including the records of former Governor Gina M. Raimondo following her appointment to the Presidential Cabinet of Joseph R. Biden, 46th President of the United States.

New collections:

- Gina M. Raimondo Gubernatorial records (50 cubic feet)
- Masks from *Conceal/Reveal* PVD Art Club Exhibit (undetermined cf)
- McTammany Voting Machine Cabinet (18.59 cubic feet)
- Captain Lewis Leavens Papers (.18 cubic feet)
- General Assembly - House Committee Records (86 cubic feet)
- Rhode Island Women Veterans Memorial Project planning documents (.18 cubic feet)
- RADical Women exhibit banners (est. 10 cubic feet)
- Historic Grant Files, State Council on the Arts (3 cubic feet)

ACCESS AND USAGE

1,242

NEW ENTRIES

New entries added to the Archives Catalog.

894,454

LINKED RECORDS

Linked records from the Archives Catalog to the Digital Archive.

142,322

NEW DIGITAL FILES

Searchable and downloadable files bring the public collection to 261,633 files.

OVER

1.2 Million

DOWNLOADS

Files downloaded from the Digital Archives.

278

TOTAL VIEWS

Total views of our 2021 workshops and video tutorials.

DIGITAL



+ 2.5 TERABYTES
OF NEW ITEMS ADDED TO DIGITAL STORAGE

Our team worked to expand our Digital Archive for researchers at-home. Our team added a substantial number of new materials, including:

142,322 new records scanned for long-term preservation; and

172,310 new items uploaded to the Digital Archives.

New to the Digital Collections in 2021

Colony Records, 1646-1669, Vol. I & II, (393 images)

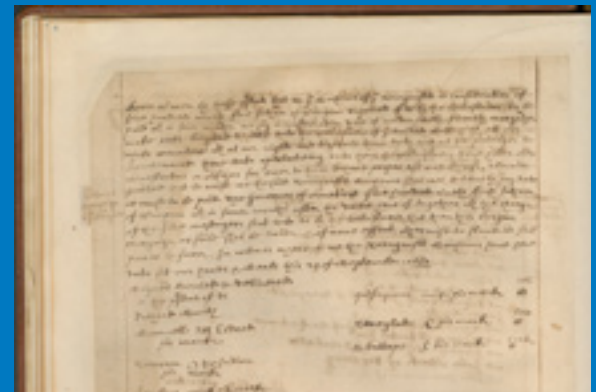
Dam Photographs (128 images)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1874 (52 images)

Narragansett Tribe Records (689 images)

Report of the Court of Magistrates (50 images)

Vital Records, 1853-1926 (140,000+ images)



Fones Record, 1659-1705, Digitized in 2021



PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S STORY

In 2021, the State Archives undertook a significant digitization project to make its highly requested [Vital Records Collection](#) from 1853-1930 available online.

1

EXAMINATION OF RECORDS

All vital records are examined prior to digitization to ensure the records are stable and intact enough for digitization.

2

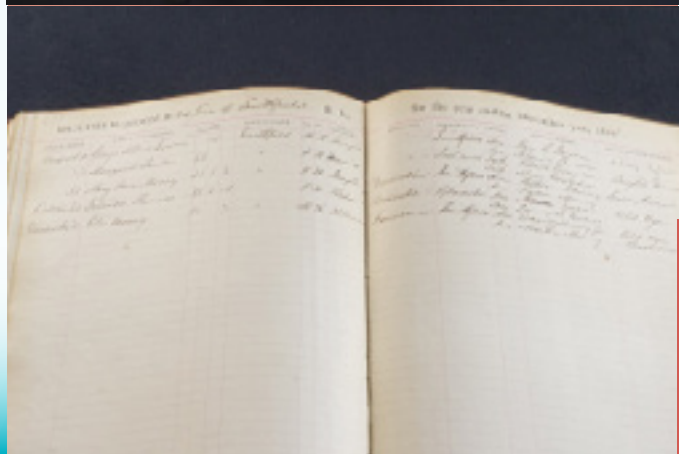
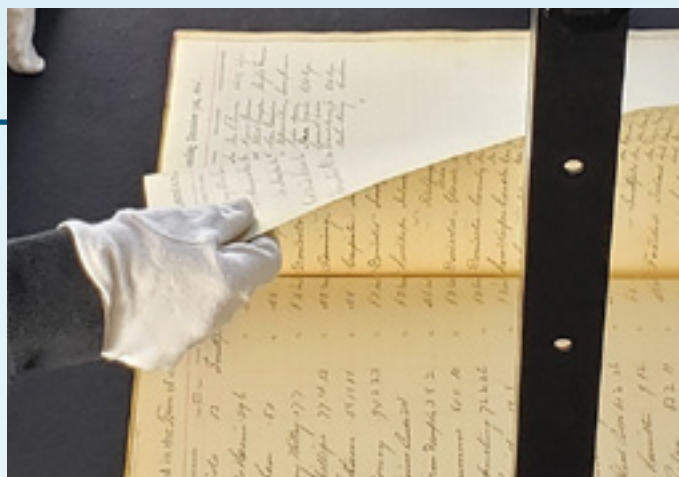
VITAL RECORDS VOLUMES

(PHASE I - VITAL RECORDS VOLUMES ARE DIGITIZED)

- All bound volumes of early vital records (1853-1920) were photographed with the use of a digital camera, LED lights, and a book pillow to support the spine.
- Vital records volumes are enhanced through Adobe Photoshop to improve contrast, brightness and sharpness to make the faded ink easier to read for the public.
- Individual bookmarked PDFs are created from the previously edited PDFs for easier download and accessibility for the public.

10% of all downloads for 2021 were vital records!

These records of births, marriages, and deaths are used for family history research by Rhode Islanders and people across the globe.





DISCOVER YOUR STORY

3

INDIVIDUAL DEATH CERTIFICATES

(PHASE 2 - INDIVIDUAL DEATH CERTIFICATES ARE DIGITIZED - ONGOING)

- All individual death certificates (post-1921) are scanned as jpegs, web friendly image files, and maintained/arranged by folder (city/town) in the Digital Archives.
- Individual certificates are examined and the dorse (back) is scanned if it contains writing and/or additional information.

4

UPLOAD AND PUBLICATION AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

- Upon completion of digitization for a volume or folder the records are ingested to the State Archives' trustworthy, digital repository for preservation and public access.
- Records are linked to the State Archives' catalog and synced nightly to keep metadata up to date across both systems.
- Records are then published to the Rhode Island State Archives Digital Archives website for access by the public in the Vital Records Collection.



"I wanted to reach out and thank you for the work you've put into making so many records available in your digital archives. It has helped my research into my family tremendously and I greatly appreciate your dedication to making these records available online (especially as someone who has some difficulty traveling)." –Katy, State Archives researcher in 2021.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

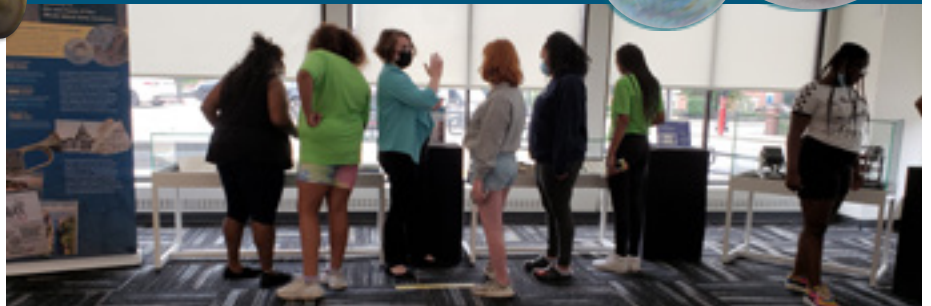
Connecting with Community

The COVID-19 public health crisis challenges us to develop new and innovative ways to connect with Rhode Islanders in-person and online while keeping people safe.

IN-PERSON EVENTS

Treasures Rediscovered

TREASURES *rediscovered*



In 2020, the State Archives relocated from its longtime location on Westminster St. This exhibit highlighted some unique items uncovered during the relocation of the State Archives to its current location at 33 Broad St.

Small but Mighty

Pequeño pero Poderoso

This bilingual exhibit explored the individuals and businesses that recognized opportunities and challenged tradition to move Rhode Island forward.

The Rhode Island State Archives presents

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

INDUSTRY

&

INNOVATION IN RI



TOUR WITH PROGRESO LATINO

The State Archives hosted a small group tour of Rhode Islanders from [Progreso Latino](#). This tour provided a special viewing of some of the state's most recognizable documents and a walkthrough of the Treasures Rediscovered exhibit. With the help of additional staff from the Department of State this tour was translated in real-time for Spanish speaking group members.



OPEN HOUSE: STATE ARCHIVES NEW 33 BROAD ST. LOCATION

On June 3rd the State Archives opened its doors to show how it preserves Rhode Island's historic treasures. Rhode Islanders who signed up in advance, to adhere with COVID-19 safety precautions, were offered an exclusive tour of the vault!



MILE OF HISTORY

Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea and State Archives staff provided a tour of the new facility for the [Mile of History](#) organization in May 2021.



FRIDAYS AT THE ARCHIVES

Rhode Islanders were invited to view rarely seen collections and documents every other Friday during July and August. Special displays included the Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence, United War Work Campaign posters, historic maps, and notable names in historic records such as George Washington, Jimmy Carter, PT Barnum, and Clara Barton.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

VIRTUAL EVENTS



ARCHIVES 102

This presentation, offered to participants of the Shall Not Be Denied program, focused on how to appraise and preserve records and also how to begin the process of potentially transferring historic records to the State Archives.

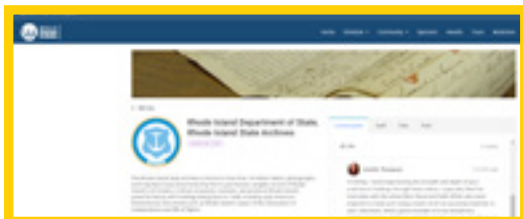
[Link to video](#)



RECORDS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

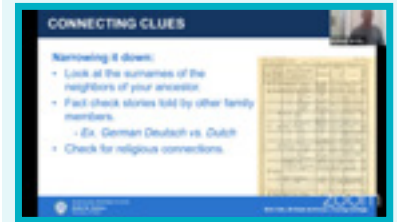
This presentation from the Local Government Records Program offered guidance and updated best practice for records management for city and town clerks and other local government agencies.

[Link to website](#)



VIRTUAL REPOSITORY TOUR

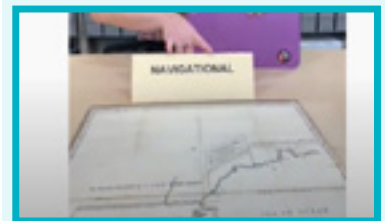
The State Archives participated in the Annual Conference of the Society of American Archivists to offer pre-recorded virtual tours and Rhode Island history video content.



GENEALOGY (FACEBOOK LIVE)

In this virtual genealogy workshop, Rhode Island State Archives staff shared tips, resources, strategies, and answered questions about getting started with researching family history and heritage.

[Link to video](#)



MAP SHOWCASE (INSTAGRAM LIVE)

This virtual program took visitors on a walkthrough of six of the most popular types of maps found among the hundreds preserved at the State Archives.

[Link to video](#)



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

SIDEWALK EXHIBIT



"Signature"

by Nafis White

Nafis White is an interdisciplinary, multihyphenate artist whose recent body of works are created from objects commonly found in beauty supply stores, industrial sites and the seemingly limitless horizons of our global and political landscapes. Through weaving, hairdressing, sculpture and installation, White centers the uncanny audacity of self-affirmation and love by means of repetition as a form of change. White is inspired by raw materials and their transformative properties and abilities to tell dynamic stories when in congress. White's formal training is in sculpture, printmaking and digital media. She uses concept as anchor and medium as message in her work moving within conceptual and durational realms. Community engagement, beauty and the political root deep in White's work.

For more information visit nafiswhite.com

[View the recorded interview with Nafis and Secretary of State, Nellie Gorbea](#)



Signature, by artist Nafis White, was on display at the State Archives through February and March 2021. The sidewalk exhibit, a continuation of the Centennial of Women's Suffrage events, was created to examine and celebrate the achievements of women and their tireless efforts to attain collective suffrage through the passage of the 19th amendment.



SHARING OUR HISTORY

24
SHARES

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR THE YEAR



719
VIEWS

53
RETWEETS



57
LIKES



AMERICA AT 250

In 2021, a bill drafted by Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea's office was signed into law, creating the Rhode Island Semiquincentennial (RI 250th) Commission.

The 30-member commission will work to commemorate Rhode Island's unique role in the founding of our country and stimulate the local economy through civic engagement and tourism opportunities.

In 2022, the State Archives will explore more personal stories of our state and its people through community curated exhibitions and collaboration to celebrate the voices of Rhode Island past and present beyond the scope of our government records.

As part of a government agency, the State Archives is home to the official records of this period and looks forward to collaborating with communities and organizations across Rhode Island to commemorate this important event in a manner that is dynamic and inclusive.

[View The Gaspee Raiders Virtual Exhibit](#)





Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

CONCEAL/REVEAL SIDEWALK EXHIBIT

The Providence Art Club invited Rhode Islanders to participate in a collaborative creative project to decorate masks to remember together the importance of the arts in difficult times. This exhibit travelled throughout the state, including a display at the State Archives, before being donated to the State Archives for permanent preservation.

This publication
was produced by the Rhode
Island Department of State